

VOLUNTEER & COMBINATION OFFICERS SECTION

of the

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS



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January 7, 2004

Marlene H. Dortch

Secretary

Federal Communications Commission

445 Twelfth Street, S.W.

Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: WT 02-55 Improving Public Safety Communications in the 800 MHz Band

Dear Madame Secretary,

In these times of heightened security and alert, our first responders need the support of the FCC in resolving a most critical issue. One of the most pressing issues we as chiefs, firefighters and other first responders face today is 800 MHz interference to their radios. No one can argue that highly reliable communications for public safety professionals does not save lives and/or cost lives or cause injury when it fails

Interference in the 800 MHz band can come between a firefighter on the front line of defense and the chain of decision-makers assisting in an emergency situation at any time even during a time of life saving instructions. In fact, it is estimated that public safety agencies will experience interference at more than 350 locations this year – the highest single-year total to date. As a chief officer working on at an emergency scene I can assure you one of the most stressful and disturbing acts of any fire ground commander is not being able to relay life threatening reports to his/her staff while engaged in an emergency scene activity. The trend is alarming and foreshadows the day when communications are interrupted during a future catastrophic event.

The Consensus Plan proposal for the realignment of the radio spectrum is the only solution to the current situation supported by all the major public safety organizations, including our national association, the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and our section, The Volunteer & Combination Officers Section, representing 2000 volunteer and combination fire chiefs across the United States.

We advocate for the Consensus Plan because it:

- Remedies interference to public safety communications systems and private wireless systems operating at 800 MHz
- Minimizes disruption to existing licensees and services - 70 percent of existing private wireless incumbents achieve benefits of Consensus Plan without any system modifications whatsoever

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- Ensures public safety agencies have access to additional spectrum to support their critical missions
- Requires no federal, state or local funding to implement

In a nutshell, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. I urge you and the FCC to adopt the Consensus Plan and to expedite implementation as quickly as possible.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Larry W. Curl". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Larry" being the most prominent.

Larry Curl, Chairman
Volunteer & Combination Officers Section
International Association of Fire Chiefs

Copies to:
Chairman Powell
Commissioner Abernathy
Commissioner Adelstein
Commissioner Copps
Commissioner Martin